

## **Consolidated Reply: Comparative Experiences/Capacity Development and Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness**

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### **Original Query**

Dear Capacity-Net members,

In preparation for the upcoming [Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness](#) to be held on 2-4 September 2008 in Accra, Ghana, the Learning Network on Capacity Development (LenCD) and Capacity-Net are partnering in collecting inputs towards both the High Level Forum and a workshop on “Capacity Development – Accra and Beyond” to be held in May in Bonn, Germany. Therefore, we would like to initiate a discussion on the following set of questions:

- 1) Which high-impact measure(s) should feature in the Accra Action Agenda to help ensure capacity development is systematically promoted?
- 2) How are these measures supporting home-grown capacity development efforts?
- 3) Why do you think the recommended measure can effectively make a difference?

The current situation is that capacity development is in everybody's vocabulary in the Accra preparatory process, but there will not be a specific roundtable at the forum dedicated to the capacity development topic. Therefore, it is likely that the Accra Action Agenda will not be very specific in terms of capacity development content. In fact, some developing countries and CSOs are afraid that the process may not lead much further than to a reiteration of commitments already made in the Paris Declaration of 2005.

Consequently, the fundamental challenge is to crystallize the "1000 flowers that bloom" into a handful of concrete, actionable and communicable propositions that can influence and shape the Accra Action Agenda. Within this exercise, LenCD and Capacity-Net will collect your inputs and prepare a consolidated summary for both the [Bonn Workshop and Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness](#).

This query will run for 2 weeks, **15-28 April, 2008**.

We look forward to an exciting exchange and fruitful discussion on the above questions. Please, do not hesitate to contact us for clarification on this query at [jayne.musumba@undp.org](mailto:jayne.musumba@undp.org) and [steffen-joerg.mueller@gtz.de](mailto:steffen-joerg.mueller@gtz.de).

Best regards,

Jayne Musumba (Capacity-Net) and Steffen Müller (LenCD)

## Contributions were received, with many thanks, from:

*Click on the links to go straight to the contribution.*

1. Dominique Musenga Kabeya, UNDP Democratic Republic of Congo
2. Janey Lawry-White, UNDP New York
3. Bill Tod, SNV Asia
4. Minoli de Bresser, UNDP Suriname
5. Abla Amawi, UNDP Lebanon
6. Jamshed Kazi, UNV Bonn
7. Nelly Grieco, Niger
8. Nanette Svenson, UNDP Panama
9. Marta Gazideda, UNDP Kosovo
10. Taye Amssalu, UNDP Ethiopia
11. Heather Baser, ECDPM Canada
12. Seeta Prabhu, UNDP India

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## Summary Response

*Many thanks to the members who responded to this query*

The query aimed to identify a handful of concrete, actionable and communicable propositions that can influence and shape the Accra Action Agenda. This summary focuses on the above three questions, highlighting the main topics drawn from the contributions received from network members.

### 1. Which high-impact measure(s) should feature in the Accra Action Agenda to help ensure capacity development is systematically promoted?

#### Leadership capacity of the partner

Support to leadership capacity development was referred to as a main CD tool and high impact measure. The following suggestions made concerning this topic:

- Encourage the Government to take a proactive approach to CD and lead the process of human capacity assessment.
- Encourage the Government to develop a “home-grown” CD strategy and play an active role in selecting the best-placed donor for specific areas of assistance.
- Introduce the concept and importance of Capacity Assessment (CA) and different methodologies, leading to the Government’s decision on a unified methodology of CA and CD which must be adhered to by donors.
- Emphasise the importance of effective leadership within countries and national institutions to help groups to work together.
- Address the generation of knowledge and ideas which form the foundation of all capacity development exercises within and across countries.
- Support think tanks, universities and scholastic work to enable national governments to build capacity in the long term.
- Invest in the places where ideas originate as leadership development needs to encompass the intellectual realm.
- The development of leadership in the partner country is critical as it helps to ensure national ownership.

### **National ownership**

The following suggestions were made to increase the ownership of the partner country in developing national capacities:

- The AAA needs to signal commitment to developing capacity for deeper ownership and broader accountability. The three major actors to work with are citizens/civil society organisations, local government and service providers. The five accountability actions are delegating, financing, performing, informing and enforcing. Further recommendations include organisational development of CSOs, local government, service providers; building multi-stakeholder platforms; introducing new feedback mechanisms (public hearings, citizens score cards etc); clarifying relationships, roles and responsibilities vertically and horizontally; institutionalising participatory planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation around local development plans.
- Deepening ownership and broadening accountability necessarily means more attention to capacity development at the local level.
- Going beyond taking the Paris Declaration to the national level and localising it to the sub-national level.
- More concrete articulation required in terms of how the AAA plans to 'build the capacity of and increase the use of country systems'
- More concrete articulation required on how the AAA will address the continued prevalence of Project Implementation Units (PIUs).
- The national counterpart should be involved in the allocation of budgetary resources.
- The national counterpart should be partnering with the donor institution during the entire process of the programmes to ensure the national ownership.
- The initiative for a programme should come from the partner, not from the donor.
- Clear distinction should be emphasised between capacity development and capacity gap-filling in favour of the former.
- There is a need to outline an exit strategy for the donors. Knowledge from expatriate advisors is to be transferred to national counterparts in order to avoid both dependence on external assistance and the risk of gap-filling / capacity substitution rather than CD.
- Development stakeholders should be in competition and selected by authorities in partner countries to get more effectiveness of public aid.
- A distinction should be made between technical and financial support. Any financial support would be put in a basket fund managed by the selected expert stakeholder.
- Diagnostics of existing capacity relative to desired aims should be utilized as well as frameworks for linking initiatives with national agendas.
- Evidence should be made of concrete (high impact) results in the form of changes in institutions / legislation / policies that drive sustainable national / local progress - beyond the involvement of the international partner.
- CD development strategies should be demand-driven to ensure national ownership.

### **Common approach to capacity development**

The need of a common approach to capacity development and a consistent definition of CD that is harmonised among the donor community were given great relevance in order to avoid unnecessary duplication. One of the recommendations was to get the OECD/DAC countries to agree on one common approach and implementation process which must then be adapted to the local country situation.

### **Integrated multi level approach**

On how this integrated approach should be designed the following suggestions were made:

- Be aware that the change process is bigger than one organisation or intervention.
- A singular focus on individual skills without supporting the drivers of empowerment, leadership, public participation, and institutional change is not enough.
- A systematic rather than an individual approach should be applied.

- Priority programmes of capacity development should extend beyond PFM, procurement, and managing for development results.
- There is a critical importance of strengthening leadership, empowerment, communication and people management skills within the rank and file of the public sector, including the younger generation of leaders.
- In countries (especially in Africa) where the 'brain drain' phenomena has really stifled development in critical sectors (e.g. health, education), development partners should strengthen support for programmes that seek to benefit from the knowledge and capacities of the Diaspora.
- The downstream or local level should be taken into account as well.
- Capacity experts should be more wide-ranging and creative about capacity development and take into account further aspects such as informal or shadow processes, issues of power and control, the role of symbolism, and dysfunctional or even destructive behaviour.
- Capacity development goes beyond economic growth and spans institutional, cultural, historical, logistical, political and financial dimensions.
- As the traditional approach of planning and control has limited utility and the balance of issues in development cooperation is shifting away from predictability and towards complexity and unpredictability, there is a need to look for more flexible approaches with open, unplannable results.
- Individual competencies and group capabilities should be considered as well as the organisational or systems level.
- Capacity development assistance provided by donors should be linked to the broader set of country reforms to ensure its effectiveness.

### **Proximity to the partner**

There was a mutual consent among the discussants that the CD efforts should be taken closer to partner countries and institutions. Accordingly, suggestions are as follows:

- Put more emphasis on understanding the country, identifying appropriate partners and building relationships.
- Align CD strategies with the country context.
- Encourage staff to develop in-depth cultural understanding of partner countries.
- Work on how to move the CA into an in-depth institutional analysis where the "inner workings" of the partner institution and the enabling environment in which it functions are examined.
- Set up instances to denounce projects that have no impact or bad practices. These claiming instances would be listening to opinions of projects' beneficiaries/users.
- Establish close donor–partner country contact and foster interpersonal contacts.
- Bringing services and operations closer to the recipients.

### **Monitoring & Evaluation**

The following suggestions were made to highlight the importance of improving M&E systems:

- Quality monitoring of programme interventions should be routinely instituted to demonstrate what works, what doesn't and why.
- The evidence gathered should be used systematically as lessons learned to consistently strengthen future programming.
- Efforts should build on already existing relevant knowledge.
- Target populations should be trained to monitor projects in their communities in order to support both capacity development in quality programming and building national ownership.
- Minimum standards of M&E should be established to be included in capacity building programmes and a guide figure (e.g. 5% of all project budgets) to be dedicated to M&E.

**Further prominent points of the discussion were:**

- The need of donor coordination/harmonisation in order to avoid difficulties on government counterparts.
- The special conditions for CD efforts in fragile States.
- The need of long-term engagement in order to ensure sustainable development as well as the need to find a balance between the short- and the long-term.
- The crucial role of civil society and the necessity to involve CSOs into national CD strategies.
- Budgetary resource allocation should be institutionalised and documented in terms of minimum percentage in order to reduce the administrative costs of projects and increase the reserved share for the targeted activities.

**2. How are these measures supporting home-grown capacity development efforts?**

Reference to the home-grown aspect was made by the following comments:

- All home -grown initiatives need leadership to replicate and/or apply in the specific context. Actually leadership is a prerequisite for home-grown CD development in all dimensions.
- It should be worked with shared - international and national partner - contributions (financial and human resource), shared development of objectives and shared implementation - all of which indicates support for “home-grown” CD efforts.

**3. Why do you think the recommended measure can effectively make a difference?**

As the recommended actions are mostly suggested by practitioners who are directly involved in development processes in the partner countries, the suggestions are practice oriented and emanated from realistic problems. Therefore, they should be practicable, applicable and thus can make a difference.

**Conclusion**

It was a fruitful, open and very enriching discussion that brought useful new aspects to the current debate on capacity development and aid effectiveness. Network members appreciated the opportunity to submit their contributions. Their inputs have been incorporated in the final report of the Bonn workshop which articulates the CD priority and potential actions going into the Accra High Level Forum and beyond.

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**Recommended Additional Resources**

1. [UNDP Practice Note on Supporting Capacities for Integrated Local Development](#), November 2007
2. [UNDP Capacity Development Action Briefs: Case Evidence on 'Brain Gain', No.1](#), April 2007
3. [United Nations Development Group: Response to the Changing Aid Environment](#), January 2008
4. [Study on Capacity, Change and Performance](#), May 2008

**Related Websites:**

5. [Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness](#), 2-4 September 2008, Accra, Ghana
6. [On the Road to Accra and Beyond](#)
7. [Bonn Workshop: "Capacity Development: Accra and Beyond"](#), 14-15 May 2008